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CHRISTMAS POULTRY.

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To a student of character and manners, there are few things more amusing than a walk past the poultry-shops in Leadenhall or Smithfield Market on Christmas Eve. By then the rich and well-to-do have rejoined their families in the country to hang the mistletoe in hall and weave the holly round the Christmas hearth. In middle-class suburban homes pianos are tinkling, and the dancing and merriment have already begun. But there is a residue of poor who have no distant friends to visit, and no money to spend on railway fares, yet to whom the approaching holiday is the solitary one of the year, and who only now begin to choose their Christmas dinner. And this is a very serious matter. By pinching and saving, a sum, scarcely ever amounting to more than half-a-sovereign, has been amassed, and how to make the most of it requires deep and serious consideration. Mere common sense would answer quickly enough that a leg of frozen mutton at, say, five shillings would provide a solid foundation, and leave a nice balance for accessories.

But the genuine Cockney labourer scorns the idea. The appropriate dish for the day is goose, and he will have it reason or none. Turkey is for the genteel, but goose for the democracy. A stranger might very well think it out of the reach of these crowds waiting about in the biting winter air. They are ill-shod, scantily clothed, and a sharp-set look in their faces seems to intimate that they have missed a meal in order to complete the work of saving. Nevertheless they show no impatience. By watching, you will soon learn that they cherish a high ideal of goose, and do not mean to be put off either with a thin gosling or a tough old gander. A mental selection is very soon made. You may see two 'mateys' or a man and his 'missis' deep in consultation, which ends by their fixing upon, say, an eight-and-sixpenny fowl. But to give that sum is out of the question. Well they know the way of the poulterer. He has all his stock on view, and will

make a strong effort to sell out before closing-time, sure that the demand will be small for days after. So these poor purchasers make up their minds to wait for a fall, and they often linger from dusk till near midnight in the determination to get value for their money. As long as there are customers the salesman makes no change, but as the more respectable classes become satisfied, a lull comes in his business. 'All this row for seven-and-six,' he cries at last, and the sale is stimulated for another hour or two; but the mass still hold back—they want more than half-a-crown for the beer, gin, and other anserine concomitants. But in due time another lull comes. 'Six-and-six,' cries the salesman, and then there is a rush. 'I'll have that one, guv'nor,' 'This is mine,' 'And mine,' 'And mine,' shout as many different voices, showing that each had made his selection beforehand. One cannot help recalling Jean Macalpine's famous exclamation: 'To see thae English belly-gods! Set roast beef and pudding on the opposite side of the pit of Tophet, and an Englishman will make a spang at it!'

Curiously enough, we learn by inquiring of the large dealers that, unshaken as the popularity of the goose remains, it is not bred so largely in England as it used to be. Most of these fat birds come from Holland, and a great many from France. The reason probably is, that we have curtailed the conveniences for keeping them. Of old it was a familiar thing in rural England to see a rheumatic crone driving her geese in from the common, but that was before the extensive enclosures took place. Waste has been reclaimed, and mere and moss drained, till the poor at all events are not able to maintain geese. And there is a long-standing prejudice against water-fowl on the part of the fishermen. As early as 1620 this entry occurs in the Tweedmouth Court Rolls: 'We find yt whosoever within the town of the Spittle shall keep any ducks or drakes after Martinmas next shall pay a fyne of vii. viiid.' In these days of angling clubs and strictly preserved waters, a quiet but none the less effective pressure

is put upon those who are inclined to utilise rivers for a similar purpose. When the British farmer does go in for rearing geese, or indeed any other kind of poultry, he is rather unsatisfactory, for he will not take the trouble to discriminate between the classes, but sends up big and little, good and bad, in one consignment, and is grieved and astonished if he does not obtain a uniform price for them. On the Continent the work of collection has been reduced to a system, and the sorting is very carefully done.

The number of chickens sold at Christmas-time far exceeds that of any other bird, and of them it may at least be said that they are home-grown. Every year we pay the foreigner over four million pounds for eggs, but the imports of game and poultry are not worth an eighth of that sum. Occasionally our dealers have recourse to the French market, but Parisians are great epicures in regard to fowls, so that the best fetch a price which it will not pay the London dealer to give. A number come from Russia and Austria-Hungary, and the New Zealanders have for the past few years been sending us frozen chickens, but not in quantities sufficient to affect the home market. The British consumption of fowls is very largely on the increase, but it is extremely difficult to form an approximate guess at the extent of the growth of the industry that supplies the demand. Our Board of Agriculture does not include such 'small deer' in its annual statistics. In 1884 and 1885 attempts were made to do so, but they were soon discontinued. As the information is regularly collected in Ireland and in France, there seems to be no good reason for not doing so in Great Britain, now that fowl-keeping has become of such importance. If we were to take the favourite district for fowl-rearing as typical of the rest of the country, the business would seem to be advancing by leaps and bounds. This is the famous Heathfield district of Sussex, which practically supplies London with 'Surrey fowls,' as they are called in the trade—the name Surrey being apparently given on the principle adopted by the Aberdeen builder, who put up a straight row of houses and called it a crescent, and on being asked why, replied because it wasn't one! Ten years ago about £60,000 worth of chickens were sent away every year from Heathfield station, and now the value is reckoned at £140,000. As much as forty-seven tons of chickens have been despatched in one week from a single station. Of course this is an exceptional district, with a great name for fowls, and in which there are families with whom rearing and fattening has been a business for generations; but it is a lucrative trade, and one that might be carried on all over the kingdom.

The first point to be considered by those who wish to go in for chicken-rearing on an extensive scale, is the breed of fowls most suitable for the purpose. On this there has been much controversy. Those who believe in blood and fancy are

the objects of ceaseless war at the hands of Mr Tegetmeier, the well-known authority of the *Field*, who holds that 'breeding for points' is mere ruin, from the utilitarian point of view. He is specially indignant at the manner in which the English game-cock has been developed into a sprawling, long-legged, thin-chested abortion. But the best authorities on this practical matter are the leading salesmen, who learn from their customers exactly what kinds are most in demand. Even they are not fully agreed. Take, for instance, the question of colour. An objection continually urged against the Orpingtons is, that although they fulfil the conditions as to size and plumpness, they are black-legged, and consequently do not look well on table. Some go so far as to say that a dark leg is indicative of coarseness, instancing the Minorca as a case in point. The Minorca is an excellent bird for laying purposes, as good as the Leghorn itself, but it certainly is no table-fowl. On the other hand, Mr Bellamy, a well-known poulterer of Jermyn Street, says that his fashionable customers attach no importance whatever to the colour of the leg, and buy Orpingtons as freely as any other. But it is worth noting that the Sussex farmers will not keep them. The Orpington comes to a great size, but it matures too slowly for their purpose. The ideal fowl must be capable of being fattened at a very early age, otherwise it will not be sufficiently tender. In the opinion of Mr Brooke, a leading salesman of the Central Market, and a pastmaster of the Poulterers' Company, as well as a most successful exhibitor at those shows of dead poultry started by Sir Walter Gilbey, the best of all is a cross between the Dorking and Indian Game. Undoubtedly the latter, in appearance as well as in taste, resembles the wild pheasant more than any other domestic fowl. The cross is hardy and vigorous, and stands the process of fattening extremely well. A chicken bred from a yellow-legged Indian Game and a white-legged Dorking almost invariably has a white leg and the five toes characteristic of the Dorking. For experiment's sake Mr Brooke kept a careful record of the progress made by his prize birds. Of seven cockerels, the largest bird gained 14 oz. in seven days. It weighed 8 lb. 6 oz. on the 21st of September, and 9 lb. 4 oz. on the 28th of the same month, and when killed on the 9th of October weighed 9 lb. 6 oz. after being plucked and cold. The average gain made by the birds in a week was 9½ oz. Of two pullets, one grew from 6 lb. to 6 lb. 12 oz. in the same time, and the other 5 lb. 6 oz. to 5 lb. 13 oz. At the show the larger of these two birds weighed 7 lb. 6½ oz. plucked and cold.

There is nothing very difficult or abstruse in the process by which these large fowls are produced. Except for spring chickens, the natural mother is the best; but of course those who wish to net the fancy prices to be had in March are obliged to use incubators for hatching out in November and December. In the chicks two things are necessary: a strong constitution and a crop. It is very important to watch over their early days. Many people fail because they begin at the very start to feed their birds by rule of thumb with so many regular meals a day. But this is opposed to the way of nature. Any one who has observed nestlings must have been struck with the frequency with which the parents carry

food to them. From early daylight of a summer morning till dark, a pair of thrushes have been observed to carry food to the nest once every five minutes, taking an average. Young pheasants and partridges peck almost continuously, except for brief intervals when they stop to sun themselves on a bank. The secret of rearing in captivity the more delicate nestlings is to copy this plan, and feed often and with but a little at a time. One reason for insisting upon this with domestic fowls is, that if they fall away at first, they never seem able to recover the lost ground. A good start is of the very first importance. They come on very quickly with a diet of bird-seed—always assuming that they have a good range for picking up green food. If there are gardens or other grounds to be protected from the scratching of the hen, a good plan is to tether her to a peg. This is much better than the common method of caging her in a barred coop. She grows quickly accustomed to the tether, and begins scratching for her youngsters almost from the moment she is first set down.

The birds should not be over-fed at first. Indeed, it is most important at every stage never to surfeit them, or give more food than can be digested. At the age of three or four months, according to the condition of the birds, the work of fattening begins in earnest. Cramming has been carried to great perfection of recent years. For a week or two the fowl is allowed to feed itself in order that it may 'get a crop.' Then more resolute measures are taken. A generation ago it was done by hand. The feeder made little pellets of food about the size of acorns, which were dipped in milk and forcibly thrust down the gullet. Now the French plan is being more and more adopted in England. A fattening-room—the largest perhaps in the country—was visited by the writer not long ago. Originally it had been an old straw barn, but was now fitted up with tiers of tiny stalls just large enough for a chicken to turn in. Here the birds have nothing to do but sit and grow fat. The cramming apparatus is a kind of pump on wheels, containing a reservoir filled with food of the consistency of paste, and made of Indian and barley meal mixed with milk. This is squirted through a thin tube when the treadle is pressed by the foot. The attendant takes each fowl in his arms, gently opens his mouth with his hand, and thrusting the tube down its throat, into the crop, pumps in a supply of food. It is done so quickly that an expert can feed forty dozen birds in an hour. Experience has taught him the exact quantity. A beginner is liable to make two serious mistakes. He may easily burst the crop if he does not know exactly when to stop, and he must learn to keep the bird's neck on the stretch; if he does that, the tube passes down without meeting any obstruction; but should there be any slackness or twisting, there is great danger of hurting the throat. Success largely depends on taking care that one supply of food is digested before the next is given. The fowls are crammed twice a day—once between seven and eight in the morning, and once about dark. If the condition of the crop shows that digestion has not taken place, the bird is not fed; and if the stoppage continues, a purgative is given. When sour food is left on the stomach it soon begins to show the consequences in a dark, unhealthy-looking skin,

which contrasts markedly with the bright pink flesh of a fowl in good condition.

A very practical question that arises is whether the process of fattening is profitable in itself, and considered apart from any incidental advantage arising from the distinction of winning prizes at a Christmas or other show. The answer is a decided affirmative. We do not say that the price realised for a fowl specially, and at extra expense, prepared for exhibition would cover the outlay upon it, but that is an exceptional case. He who looks only to the ordinary market would stop at a certain point. Mr Brooke gave the writer a most instructive case in point. A number of live fowls were sent to him from the country in the usual way of business. They were, as nearly always happens with the feathered stock of the British farmer, very far from being in top condition, and the few sold realised only eighteenpence apiece. Whereupon he sent them for a fortnight or so to his fattening establishment, and had them returned, when they realised two-and-ninence. To secure this substantial advance in price, he had laid out only threepence each in food. That is typical of many transactions. The farmer, probably some small holder, might just as well have had the extra profit in his own pocket. Nothing special was done—nothing, that is to say, which the poorest labourer might not do for himself. The food given and the methods employed are within reach of all.

But the great hindrance to the development of this trade lies in the unmethodical collection. No doubt this in its turn is due to the irregularity of the industry. In the Heathfield district the one branch of the calling has grown up side-by-side with the other. The 'carriers' charge one shilling a dozen for collecting, conveying and delivering to market, and the chickens are consigned to salesmen, who get rid of them on commission. A similar plan has been adopted in Kent, where an important poultry trade has grown up during recent years. But elsewhere there is no system at all, and the isolated individuals who see their way to make a good thing out of poultry sooner or later give it up for want of a market. The only chance is when a number of people are living together, so that it will really pay the higgler to make a regular round among them. This is where the French beat us so thoroughly in regard to eggs. So perfect is their system of collection, that French eggs often command in the London market better prices than English. Nor is this altogether as irrational as it looks. One day last spring, while discussing this very point with one who has done much to revive the home poultry business, an experiment was suggested. We went to an ordinary suburban shop and purchased twelve French eggs and twelve so-called new-laid country eggs, setting each clutch under a broody hen. The result will not surprise any one who has carefully looked into the subject. In due time seven Frenchmen, but only five English, appeared—pretty strong evidence that the foreign eggs were fresher than the home produce! The reason simply is, that the collection is erratic. Few of the ordinary country-people know that by steeping an egg in lime-water it may be kept fresh for months. Eggs are simply laid aside, and the cadger gets perhaps one new laid and two that have been a

fortnight on the shelf. In that lies the root of the whole matter; and it is hopeless to expect any great expansion of our poultry-keeping till system and regularity are introduced into our method of collection.

THE FASCINATION OF THE KING.

CHAPTER XIII.—THE END.

SOMETIMES when I lie awake now and, looking back upon those dreadful days of suspense, think of all we suffered on the king's account, I am tempted to believe that it must have been a nightmare, and that it never could have really happened. Our anxiety was quite beyond expression in words. For three days, after my return from the defeat of the enemy in the jungle, we waited hour by hour for the dread news that we knew would shatter all our hopes and bow us to the earth in the keenest sorrow of our lives. Even the good tidings that came to us from the front, telling us of Du Berg's continued success against the foe, scarcely moved us beyond a mere expression of congratulation, so wrapped up were we in our own more direful concerns. And yet I am wrong in calling it our own, for our sorrow was not confined to the palace, but was shared by the whole country at large. Day and night the great gates were besieged by inquirers, who did not content themselves with one visit, but returned again and again to ask for later news. If any proof had been wanting of the love entertained for the king by his people, this would surely have furnished it. Men and women of all ranks and ages—nay, even little children, thronged the portal continually, and went sorrowfully away on being informed by the sentries that they had still no satisfactory news to impart. Some of the scenes were pathetic in the extreme, and once I remember being compelled to turn my face away in order to hide my emotion when a tiny babe, whose age could scarcely have totalled five summers, clad only in a shirt which barely sufficed to cover half his brown little body, made his way up the hillside and appeared before me, bearing in his hand the root of a plant which he had heard his mother say would infallibly restore the king to health. I took it from him, and conveyed it to Olivia, who wept over it openly.

At sundown that selfsame evening the king became conscious, and asked for me. The doctor having given his permission, Olivia came in search of me, and found me sitting with Natalie upon the battlements. I rose immediately his request was made known to me, and accompanied my sister downstairs to the sick-room.

Nerved as I was to find a change in the man before me, I was quite unprepared for the terrible picture he presented as I entered the room. His face, which was always thin, now resembled that of a skeleton covered with a dead white skin, from which his dark eyes stared like lumps of coal. He seemed, moreover, to have shrunk to half his former size, and this in less than a week.

As soon as he saw me he made a sign to his wife to leave us alone together. Having given me the strictest injunctions on no account to let

the invalid tire himself by too much talking, she went out of the room.

When she had shut the door behind her, I approached the bed and took the king's hand.

'Instow,' he said, but so feebly that I had to put my ear close to his mouth in order that I might catch his words, 'I want to talk to you while I have time. I am very ill, and God alone knows if I shall ever be better. In case I should not'—

He paused for breath, and it was nearly half a minute before he could continue.

'In case I should not, I want you to promise me that you will take care of Natalie,' he said. 'I know you will look after Olivia and the boy.'

'You need have no fear,' I answered, with a lump in my throat that almost prevented me from speaking. 'I will guard them all as long as I have life. I ought to tell you that I have asked Natalie to be my wife, and that she has consented.'

He closed his eyes, and I heard him mutter, 'Thank God!' Then opening them again, he looked at me and squeezed my hand so feebly that it was like the touch of a little child.

'It is what I have always hoped and wished should happen,' he said. 'Now, if God wills it, I can die happy.'

'But you are not going to die,' I said, roused out of the quietude I had resolved to display by his words. 'You are going to live and make your country, that loves you so devotedly, the place you dreamed it would some day be.'

He did not answer, save with a look of unutterable longing.

'What news have you for me about the war?' he asked after a little interval.

'The best,' I answered. 'Your army is everywhere victorious. Du Berg has defeated the first and third sections, and I completely annihilated the second within thirty miles of the city two nights ago. There are already signs that the enemy are preparing to discuss terms of peace. I prophesy that in less than a month it will all be settled.'

'You do me worlds of good,' he replied. 'You used to laugh at my boasts; but I knew what my people would do when they were put to the test.'

Seeing that he was growing excited, I informed him that I should not allow him to talk any more, and as I did so, as if to put a stop to our interview, the doctor entered the room. Approaching the bed, he felt his patient's pulse.

'Why, what have you been doing?' he asked. 'You're fifty per cent. stronger than you were this morning.'

'I have had good news,' he answered feebly, and a moment later bade me 'good-bye.'

On leaving the sick-room I proceeded to Olivia's boudoir, expecting to find her there. To my surprise, however, the room was empty, and though I called, thinking she might be in the room adjoining, she did not answer. The window leading into the veranda stood open, and I passed through it into the cool air outside. My whole existence seemed numbed with the intensity of my anxiety. I could think of nothing but the condition of the man I had just left, and the consequences to his kingdom if he were taken from us. Then something, what I shall never under-

stand, induced me to cross the square towards the cathedral.

With a feeling of awe, almost indescribable after this length of time, I entered the building to find a curious service proceeding. The altar was a blaze of light, and praying before it was the king's chaplain, the brave padre whose pluck had enabled us to act so promptly in saving the citadel; while kneeling on the stone steps behind him again, her head bowed upon her hands, was a woman whom I recognised at once as my sister Olivia.

Without hesitation I went softly up the aisle and took my place beside her. At the time the priest was praying for the king's life with an earnestness that touched me to the heart. The strange old building was wrapped in deepest shadow save where the lights of the high altar shone so brilliantly, and the padre's voice echoed in the darkness with a most weird effect.

When he had finished his prayer he turned towards us, upraised his hand, and gave his blessing. We remained as we were for a few moments, then we also rose and left the church. Once outside I gave my sister my arm and led her back to the palace, intending to find Natalie and place her into her charge as soon as possible. She was quite exhausted and almost beside herself with grief.

Having surrendered her to my sweetheart's tender care, I went to the sick-room and asked the doctor to call me at once should any change take place in his patient's condition. This he promised to do.

When I *did* get to bed my dreams were not good, and I had much better have been waking. One moment I was galloping after the king across the battlefield; the next I was riding with him for dear life to save the citadel; then I was in Venice and in India; and after that, by the rapid transit existing in the land of dreams, fighting the foe tooth and nail in the jungle of the Médangs.

It must have been well on for morning when I was awakened by some one who was violently shaking me by the shoulder.

Having just been dreaming that the French were attacking us, I sprang up in bed and seized my assailant by the throat. I soon saw my mistake, however. It was the doctor.

'My dear fellow,' I cried as soon as I realised this fact, 'I must apologise a thousand times for my rudeness. I took you for a Frenchman. I'm really exceedingly sorry.'

'Don't mention it, my lord,' he answered, like the good fellow he was. 'You have not hurt me in the least.'

'What has brought you to me?'

'I have come to tell you that I have made an exceedingly important discovery,' he said.

'A discovery! What on earth is it? Does it concern the king?'

'It is a matter of life and death to him.'

'Then what is it? Tell me while I dress.'

I jumped out and commenced my toilet, while he sat, pale and heavy-eyed, upon the bed watching me.

'It is this. I am beginning to believe that after all I was mistaken in my first diagnosis of his Majesty's case. Two years ago I told him I considered him consumptive. I said I thought his lungs were affected. I advised him to go to

Europe at once and consult a first-class specialist. He did so, with the result that my opinion was confirmed. Since then the disease has lain comparatively dormant—I must confess, much to my surprise. Now, however, the excitement of the last month, the amount of exertion he has taken, and, more probably than all, his fall on that eventful night are forcing what I verily hope and believe has been the cause of all the trouble out of his system. Have you ever heard his Majesty refer to his having been shot at one time or another?'

'Never,' I answered. 'If he was, I certainly cannot remember his having told me about it. You know the extraordinary life he has led. But what makes you ask such a question?'

'Because he carries a scar that tells me that at some time or another he has had a bullet in his system. I can find no mark of an exit; therefore it is logical to conclude that unless it was withdrawn by the hole it made on entering, it is still in his body.'

'And in that case the result would be what?'

'Well, that is rather a difficult question to answer offhand. It may mean nothing, it might mean everything. If it struck the chest wall, as I suppose it to have done, it might produce just the phthisical symptoms I spoke of a few moments since. If the presence of the bullet did not trouble him, it would probably, if not certainly, become encysted, after which he would, in nine cases out of ten, think no more about it. Years would go by, and phthisical symptoms, or those resembling phthisis, would develop, until he would come to believe himself in a decline. Then some violent exertion, culminating, say, in long rides and a fall from his horse, would be likely to cause the bullet to move; after which matter would form, and pain in the side, such as his Majesty has been complaining of during the past forty-eight hours, would ensue. Rigors would next set in, thereby proving indisputably the existence of a foreign element, and the case, from being medical, would then become a surgical one.'

I stopped midway in my dressing and stared at him for some seconds, so much surprised as to be unable to speak. When I recovered myself I cried:

'For heaven's sake, man, think well before you raise such hopes. Do you mean that if you can remove this bullet there is a possibility of his recovering and being a strong man once more?'

'Under God's pleasure, I do,' he answered almost with a shout. 'At the same time, however, Lord Instow, I do not withhold from you the knowledge that the operation, though simple enough in itself, is a dangerous one to attempt with one so weak. It may kill him, it may cure him.'

'But suppose you do not operate. What will the result be then?'

'He will die. In that case there is no hope at all for him. Now what am I to do?'

'Good heavens, what a position to place a man in!' I said. 'What can I answer? If I say, "Operate," and he dies, I shall feel like his murderer; on the other hand, if I withhold my consent he will die, and I shall feel equally guilty. Do you give it as your professional opinion that the operation should be performed?'

'I do,' he answered. 'That is my irrevocable opinion. I shall always think so.'

'Then let it be so,' I replied. 'As far as I am concerned, I consent. But before anything definite is settled we must have a meeting of the council. If they agree, the responsibility is off our shoulders. But they must be consulted first. How long a time can elapse before it is done?'

'It must be done in a few hours, if it is to be done at all,' he answered.

'And who will do it?' I asked.

'I shall operate myself,' he replied, 'assisted by a native surgeon from the town.'

'Very well. In that case I will give you the council's decision within an hour. In the meantime not a word to the queen! If she were alarmed without cause I should never forgive myself. She is in a very low state as it is.'

'She shall not know, believe me.'

He left me, and as soon as I had dressed I sought out the Governor, and begged him at once to call a meeting of the king's council. When the members had reached the palace and were assembled in the council hall, I placed the matter before them. The doctor was called in and examined, and after he had reiterated his opinion, consent was given to the operation being performed.

How the rest of that miserable day passed I do not know. Prior to the arrival of the doctor and his assistant, I drew Olivia into her boudoir and told her everything, trying to put it before her in as favourable a light as possible. She heard me out with a face that was white to the very lips, and when I had finished dropped into a chair and covered her face with her hands. I knelt on the floor beside her, and did my best to comfort her, but she would not hear me.

'If he dies,' she said, removing her hands, and staring straight before her with eyes that were wide open and yet seemed to see nothing, 'it will kill me. I could not live without him now. O Marie, Marie, my darling, my husband, I cannot let you go from me!'

I tried to tell her that the operation was not so serious as she imagined, but the half-lie died upon my lips unspoken. It was not the operation that was so dangerous—it was the inability of the weak patient to recover from it. Throughout that long morning I sat with her, and it was only when the clock had chimed midday that I surrendered her to Natalie and went to my own apartments. Half-an-hour later the native assistant came to inform me that the operation had been successfully performed, and that the king had recovered from the anæsthetic administered to him.

Upon hearing this I hastened to the queen's apartments and told the ladies the good news. It did me good to see the brightness come back to Olivia's eyes once more, while the pressure of Natalie's hand in mine told me what she felt upon the subject. Half-an-hour later a second bulletin was issued stating that his Majesty was progressing as favourably as could be expected under the circumstances. In this fashion the afternoon went by; bulletins were issued every hour, but it was not until nearly dusk that I saw anything of the doctor.

Then I was sitting in my own room endeavouring to make myself believe that I was reading,

when I heard a body lurch nearly against my door. Thinking some one had been taken ill in the corridor outside, I crossed the room and looked out. There I found the doctor leaning against the wall, looking more like a ghost than a man.

I led him into the room and helped him to a chair. No sooner had I got him to it, however, than he sank heavily down and fainted dead away. After I had brought him round again, which was a matter of some time and difficulty, he drank a tumblerful of almost neat spirit, and then declared that he felt himself again.

'Fancy my going off like that!' he said. 'I am more like a baby than a man. I deserve to be treated like a child for the future.'

'I am not going to hear you abuse yourself,' I answered. 'You have done the work of two men lately, and now you are suffering for it. But tell me how you left the king, and who is with him.'

'He is asleep,' he answered, 'and his wife is there. I found the bullet, and he will do now, Lord Instow; I pledge my reputation upon it. Recovery will be slow, but it will be sure. When, however, he gets about again he should be a new man.'

'God save the king!' I cried with such enthusiasm that it made even the doctor smile.

And now, to make a long story short, I may say that the case turned out as the doctor predicted. The king's recovery was very slow, but it was also very sure; and in a month from the day upon which the operation was performed he was so far advanced in health as to be able to leave his bed. By this time there was the best of good news to tell him. The preparations for the Treaty of Peace were well advanced, and the date was already fixed upon which the prime minister and a second member of his Majesty's council were to meet the representatives of the French in order to discuss it. It did one good to see the joy it gave the king to be able once more to enter upon matters connected with the government of his kingdom; and if one wanted greater pleasure than that, it was only necessary to watch the love and tenderness with which he was treated by his wife. Her devotion to him was extraordinary; she had gone near to losing him, and now that Providence had sent him back to her, as it were, almost from the brink of the grave, it seemed as if she could not do enough for him. It was a happy group that, morning after morning, sat with books or work, in the sunshine, upon the palace roof. The blackness of the past was slowly giving way to the brightness of the present, and a knowledge of this fact was discernible on every face.

Since the king's recovery rewards for past services had been showered in all directions. Polacci had been raised to the dignity of Deputy-Governor of the citadel, A-mat had been appointed special body-servant to the king, the padre was made a bishop, Du Berg received the equivalent of an English peerage, Prennan's step was confirmed, and the Chowmung received a grant of land to himself and his heirs for ever. Even the horses which had carried us so well and bravely on that terrible night were not forgotten, but were pensioned off for the rest of their equine existences.

'And now, Instow,' said the king, when he had finished reading the list, and I had given him my opinion upon it, 'I am perplexed by one thing. I fancy I have been unjust, and I want you to help me to make it right with the person I have injured. Will you do so?'

'You must first give me the facts of the case,' I said, half suspecting what was coming. 'If it lies in my power, I think you know me well enough to feel sure I will help you.'

'It concerns yourself,' he answered, with a smile. 'You have been my guardian angel, if I may so put it, ever since I first met you. To you I owe my wife, my life, and even my kingdom and my happiness. You have done more than all the rest of my friends put together, and yet you are the only one who goes unrewarded. What am I to do to set this right?'

There was the sound of a soft footstep on the stones behind me, and I turned to find Olivia and Natalie approaching us. I waited until they had come up, and then took Natalie's hand.

'If your Majesty really wishes to reward me,' I said, 'there is one way in which you can do it, and, as far as I can see, only one. It is by giving me the hand I am holding now.'

'With all my heart,' replied the king. 'If she is willing, you shall have her, Instow, with ten thousand blessings on your heads.'

He kissed his sister affectionately on both cheeks, and then shook me by the hand. Having done so, he walked to the wall and looked down at the plain below. . . . But not before I had seen that his eyes had filled with tears. That they were not tears of sorrow I felt quite certain.

Three months have passed since the interview just described, and we are in Japan, standing on the deck of my yacht in Nagasaki harbour. The king is beside me at the bulwarks, and Natalie, Olivia, and the baby are seated a little farther aft. In a few minutes we shall be saying good-bye to the land of the Chrysanthemum, and our ship's head will be pointed once more in the direction of the Médangs. Indeed, Wells is already on the bridge with the handle of the engine-room telegraph in his hand, the quartermaster at the wheel beside him, and the cable is just beginning to come aboard. A crowd of sampans and other native boats have been round us all day, but even they are beginning to draw off, and very soon we shall have said farewell to one of the loveliest harbours in the world.

We have been absent from the Médangs ever since peace was signed, nearly three months ago, and now our holiday is over and we are starting for home with his Majesty quite his old self once more. Or rather, to be correct, I should say not his old self, for he looks stronger than any of us have ever yet seen him.

Suddenly he turns from his contemplation of the boats alongside, and says very seriously to me:

'Instow, my brother, do you know what day this is?'

'The 24th of April, I believe,' I answer.

'Of course,' he replied. 'But I mean what anniversary it is?'

'I am afraid I cannot tell you that offhand,' I say. 'What is it?'

'It is two years to-day,' he observes, 'since we

sailed from Venice to the rescue of my kingdom. How much we have gone through since then!'

'Indeed yes,' I continue. 'Your Majesty has won your wife, you have a noble heir to follow you, and in the meantime you are seated more firmly upon your throne than ever.'

'Thanks to you! I shall never forget how much I owe you, Instow.'

Before I have time to answer, Olivia, with her child in her arms, comes along the deck and stands beside her husband. Seeing Natalie alone, I go aft to her and lead her to the bulwarks.

I describe to her the scene before me, and when the anchor is aboard, the screw revolving, and the vessel's head is pointing for the open sea, I draw her closer to me and ask if she is happy.

'More than happy, dear,' she replies, with a little squeeze of my hand, that, like most lovers' endearments, is more expressive than any words, and needs no answer. The yacht speeds upon her way, mile after mile drops behind us, and before long the blue hills we had been admiring all day are only a faint smudge upon the horizon.

By the time dinner is over and we have sought the deck again it is almost dark. On the eastern sea-line the moon is rising, throwing a broad bar of gold athwart our track. We make quite a family group as we stand at the taffrail watching it.

'What a lovely night it is!' says Olivia, linking her arm in her husband's, and looking up into his face as if she believed him to be responsible even for the beauty of the evening.

'It is a good omen,' says some one, and the sentiment is echoed by the group.

In a mock-heroic fashion, I strike the rail before me.

'On, on, good ship,' I cry; 'on, on, for the happiness of all my life awaits me at the other end.'

'And pray what may that be?' asks a meek little voice, which I recognise nevertheless as Natalie's.

'My marriage,' I answer promptly.

THE 'RECORD' IN DEEP-SEA SALVAGE.

THE passenger steamship *Catterthun*, of 2200 tons, the property of the Eastern and Australian Steamship Company, left Syring on the afternoon of Wednesday the 8th August 1895, on her voyage to Hong-Kong, without any premonition of her impending fate. At 2.25 on the following morning she struck heavily on a submerged reef, and after staggering on a course towards the nearest land, she went down, as was subsequently ascertained, in the open sea about three or four miles from Seal Rocks Bay, on the mainland of New South Wales, in thirty fathoms of water. There was a lamentable loss of fifty-four lives, that of the captain inclusive.

In the present instance our interest is not with the main narrative, but with the recovery of the nine thousand golden sovereigns which formed part of her freight, the greater portion of which has been regained from the depths by an extraordinary feat of deep-sea diving. The underwriters on this gold, the Sydney agency of

the Alliance Marine of London, the New Zealand Insurance Company, and others, having decided to pay as for a total loss, met together with a view to discuss whether they might not as well have a try to get back their own. An affirmative having been scored with much unanimity to this proposition, no time was lost in giving it practical effect; and on the 19th August, within ten days of the loss, an expedition, consisting of the steamers *Stirling* and *Mermaid*, under the control of Captain John Hall (underwriters' surveyor of Sydney), proceeded to the locality of the wreck as far as it could be conjectured. With a minimum of difficulty which seems surprising, the sunken rock upon which the *Catterthun* first struck was found. The evidence given by the survivors before the Marine Board of New South Wales, after the occurrence of the wreck, estimated that she had kept steaming ahead with a course towards the shore, about twenty minutes from the moment of contact with the reef; but Captain Hall's skilled judgment led him to the conclusion, from a study of subsidiary incidents, that this interval must have been considerably underestimated; and acting upon that conclusion, and following up the scent with untiring tenacity for three or four days, he at last succeeded in localising the remains of the ill-fated steamer in a position coincident with the theory which he had formulated for his own guidance. The method adopted was that of trailing a heavy steel hawser as nearly as could be judged on the bed of the sea; and on the fourth day this hawser encountered a check, which led those on board the expeditionary steamers to the hopeful conclusion that Act I. of an interesting adventure was near its termination. Diver Briggs volunteered a descent in his ordinary diving-dress, well knowing, however, that, so equipped, it was beyond his power to make bottom. He proceeded to a depth of twenty fathoms, and on his return to the upper air, reported having had a view of the *Catterthun* which, although indistinct, left no doubt whatever in his mind that Captain Hall had located his 'quarry.' 'It was like looking at a vessel through a thick mist,' observed Briggs. The object of the preliminary voyage was completed by this discovery inasmuch as it was known beforehand that any appliances then in the colony were inadequate as a means towards the recovery of the treasure. Bearings with points on the coast having been taken with as much accuracy as circumstances permitted, the vessels returned to Sydney.

The certainty of making the wreck again when wanted removed from the minds of the underwriters any lingering hesitation as to what to do next, and accordingly, upon the advice of the divers, a couple of Heincke's diving-dresses of the best quality adapted to deep-sea work were promptly ordered by cablegram from London, further operations pending their arrival being, of course, in abeyance. It was not until May of the present year that, by the receipt of this new

and practically perfect equipment, the intercepted efforts were resumed. On the 4th of that month the steamers *Sophia Ann* and *Mermaid* left Sydney for the 'Seal Rocks,' again under the command-in-chief of Captain Hall—Mr Minnett, an interested underwriter, also constituting one of the voyagers—with all necessities and with about twenty hands on board. From the bearings previously taken, the exact *locale* of the wreck was spotted on 8th May; but it was found that the anchors of the search-steamers were too light to hold, owing to the great depth and hard bottom, and a tender in waiting had to be sent to Sydney for heavier ground tackle. On the 11th, after some disappointing failures to get firm moorings, one of the divers got on to the bows of the *Catterthun*; but owing to threatening weather, he was signalled to return promptly to the surface, and having done so, the vessels made for the shelter of Seal Rocks Bay.

A persistent run of adverse weather, coupled with the strength of the coastal current, made further progress impossible, until on 1st July the divers got a wire rope fast to the *Catterthun's* bridge. On the 2d they brought to the surface the bridge compass and compass-case, with some unimportant gear; but the main interest centred upon the discovery of the treasure-chamber, a short description of which at this stage is indispensable to a proper understanding of the more serious difficulties of the enterprise. This chamber was neither more nor less than a sort of exaggerated iron tank, the only access to which was by a man-hole in its top side, approachable from the chart-room; or perhaps the more convenient explanation would be to say that the *roof* of the iron tank formed the floor of the chart-room. The cover of the man-hole was secured against amateur treatment by two of Chubb's patent locks. It is almost superfluous to observe that the divers had familiarised themselves beforehand with these details, and that a plan of the ship was under constant reference. Now it was resolved to shatter the man-hole cover by dynamite electrically fired from the *Mermaid's* deck, a process which, after some irritating delays, owing to inefficient detonators, was at last more or less successfully accomplished, although, as we shall see later on, some formidable difficulties still remained. Soundings were taken, which placed the bottom of the tank-chamber at 27½ fathoms from the surface of the sea; and the nature of the service undertaken by Briggs and May will be more accurately gauged when it is remembered that the pressure upon the human fabric at this extreme depth—which will be better understood if we translate 27½ fathoms into 165 feet—indicated from 70 to 75 lbs. to the square inch, and that eleven or twelve minutes at a time at the side of the hull was about as much as could be endured without a revivifying trip to the upper air.

No sooner had these more or less preliminary and quasi-experimental descents been concluded than disappointing delays again arose, partly

owing to the weather, and partly to the coastal current already referred to; but those who had undertaken the task were not to be daunted. The current—a thing of capricious and intermittent activity—was indeed the most formidable thing with which the divers had to contend. 'When the current is running,' observed diver Briggs, 'it bears on the air-pipe, and the strain is so great when we get any distance down that we cannot keep hold of the line. Standing on the *Catterthun's* deck is then quite impossible.' The effect, in short, was to bend the air-pipe into a semicircle.

Another spell of heart-breaking weather compelled the postponement of further effort until 4th August, on which day it was found possible to attach a strong line to the now mutilated tank-door. The line being attached to the *Mermaid's* steam-winch, a sufficient purchase was obtained to remove the remains of the door, and to permit access to the treasure within. Briggs again descended on 6th August, and sighted the boxes of gold in their receptacle, but a continuance of rough weather and strong currents for quite another week led to fresh disappointments. Captain Hall now broke down through ill-health, believed to be attributable to no other cause than an overcharged sensibility under a very trying set of circumstances, and the active responsibility became transferred to Mr Minnett, assistant underwriter of the Sydney branch of the New Zealand Insurance Company, as representing the underwriters generally; and under his control operations were resumed on 17th August, with a determination to force events to a conclusion whatever might befall. Nine times on that day did the two intrepid divers, taking their lives in their hands, descend to that almost cruel depth, Briggs remaining in the *Catterthun's* chart-room on this occasion for fifteen minutes and nineteen seconds; and although he five times succeeded in getting a grip of one box containing five thousand sovereigns, it as many times slipped away again. At this point some further detailed explanation becomes unavoidable. The boxes of treasure—for convenience of access at the port of arrival—were made to rest inside the tank upon a sort of extemporised shelving of rough wooden scantling, which, becoming disrupted by the dynamite charge, had the effect of landing them, still happily intact, among the *débris* at the bottom of the chamber. The problem was how to get hold of them. The man-hole, true to its name, was made, and was just big enough, for 'man,' but not for man *plus* diving-dress. The plan of attack adopted was therefore to get a grip of the cases by means of long-handled augers, not made the more easy by the fact that when you had your auger long enough to screw into and haul up your prey close enough to the entrance, the other end found an obstacle in the ceiling of the chart-room—a description which, be its imperfections what they may, will convey to the reader's mind the difficulties which faced these men at every turn. To resume. Briggs having returned to the surface, May now descended, and at last succeeded, by desperate effort, in getting the five thousand sovereign box into a kind of basket net prepared for the purpose, and which he promptly signalled those above to haul up, he himself remaining at his post to see it started all clear. Both man and box reached

the surface in safety to the music of a cheering welcome. Poor May was, however, in a terrible state of exhaustion. 'It looked,' as a gentleman on board remarked, 'almost like recovering a corpse;' but generous care at the hands of his fellow-expeditionaries restored him in a few hours to his normal vitality. On the 18th August two dives were made by Briggs, with the result that four of the smaller boxes were sent up. Descents, with occasional interruptions from both sea and current, continued to be made until the 20th, inclusive, on which day Briggs, having brought a box to the surface—the seventh in all—with £250, it was resolved that enough had been done for both honour and profit, and the vessels were promptly headed for Sydney, with the respectable salvage of £7942 out of a total shipped of £8957. Considerable minor parcels of gold were believed to be on board, chiefly in the possession of Chinese passengers, but the difficulties and dangers of searching for these in unknown parts of the wreck were thought disproportionate to any probable salvage results. Consequently no effort was made for their recovery.

Numerous fish, sharks inclusive, were reported as having been seen. One shark, of aldermanic dimensions, had created a kind of freehold for himself on a part of the deck inconveniently close to the chart-room door. Once or twice this gentleman assumed an obstructionist attitude, rather to the discomfort of the divers; but, from their description, his action seems to have taken the form more of resenting an intrusion upon his hearth and home than of any vicious disposition to breakfast upon his aggressors.

The wreck was reported by Briggs and May as covered with barnacles and shells, and in rapid process of disintegration. No trace of passengers or their belongings was observed.

The *Mermaid* had been elaborately fitted by the British Electrical Engineering Company with appliances for illuminating the sea-depth by electricity, as a provision against contingencies, but although used experimentally on one or two occasions, they were found in practice to be practically a superfluity. The efficiency of the experiment was, however, regarded rather in the way of a triumph, having regard to the enormous pressure upon the deeply submerged vacuum-glasses.

The only deep-sea recovery approaching this one in point of interest is that of £90,000 out of a total of £100,000 (or the equivalents thereof in Spanish) from the *Alphonso XII*, wrecked and sunk off Grand Canary in or about 1885. The depth of water in the latter case was quite a fathom in the diver's favour; but the circumstances of weather, current, and remoteness from all land shelter which attached to the case of the *Catterthun* may fairly be claimed to stamp it as so far the 'record' performance—to use the phrase of the day—in this department of enterprise.

Underwriters estimate the cost of recovery of the sunk treasure at about forty-five per cent. of the amount of the policies. The divers, it is understood, received, in addition to being 'all found' in the course of the operations, fifteen per cent. of the amount brought up. Well indeed have they earned it! Nor would it be fair to close this paper without adverting to the fact that Mr Gordon Dixon, the chief representative in Australia of the Alliance Insurance Companies of

London, was from start to finish one of the active spirits of an enterprise which, for sustained pluck and steadfastness of purpose, reflects the greatest credit upon every one concerned.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MRS MACQUOID.

II.

It was strange: it was unaccountable. Katie had gone out early. 'All by myself, for a treat,' she said. It was the first time she had not taken Johnnie, and the reason was that she was going to get him a surprise. She would take him for a drive in the afternoon.

Afternoon came, but no Katie, and the servants wondered. Johnnie was crying feebly for his promised drive, and she had never yet disappointed Johnnie. He was crying for her at night when John Macquoid, who had been out all day, came home to dinner and walked past the nursery to his dressing-room. He stopped and put in his head.

'What is the matter, little man?' he asked. The nurse—one of Johnnie's many nurses—said he was crying for his mamma.

Probably Katie would fly home presently, in a great hurry and bother at having been detained. He passed on, dressed, and came down, but was too hungry to put off dinner.

The hours went on. It was bed-time, surely. And still no Katie. Her husband grew alarmed, all kinds of fears took hold of him, and he ran up to her rooms to look round vaguely. All was ready for the mistress who had never come; the hot water was cold in the jug, and the dinner-dress, a flimsy thing that a touch might crumple, lay spread for the wearing. On the floor were Katie's little slippers, and a scent that reminded him of her floated faintly over all. With an anxious hurry that he had not time to reflect on and think absurd, he started towards the toilet-table, almost prepared to see—after the manner in books—some fatal note stabbed through with a hat-pin on the pin-cushion. But there was no such thing, and he laughed harshly at himself for the stupid fancy.

The laugh rang strangely in the empty room; and—where was Katie?

There was no trace of her that night, no sign of her in the morning. It would be difficult to count the searchers, difficult to imagine the alarm of Katie's husband.

She had a queer knack of finding her way about, which made her quite independent, and accordingly made all inquiry harder. The detectives called in made a point of looking about the premises. No lady ever yet ran away without leaving some good-bye letter—with a clue—they told each other and John Macquoid; but when they had turned the house upside down and questioned the household rigorously, they came to the conclusion that this lady had. Unless there had been an accident.

Katie's husband started off with a set, white face. He had looked in the papers shuddering, and had seen nothing; now he went from hospital to hospital, passing slowly and fearfully through the accident wards. There were many

women in these hospitals, all lying in the same still way, their limbs moulded death-like under the white sheet, and their faces sometimes hidden; and many were unknown. It cut his breath to glance up the wards and see farther on some ghastly shape that might be—Katie.

At one hospital they brought him to a woman who had been run over on the same day that Katie disappeared, and he lagged in a kind of terror; then hastened, in a revulsion of eagerness, to follow close. Her face was bound up beyond all knowing, and a terrible uncertainty took hold of him. The eyes were closed. Was not that brown hair Katie's? Stooping over the bed, he tried to see the face that was marred and bandaged. Could it be? The nurse lifted one of the nerveless hands from under the coverlet, and he looked at it eagerly. There were no rings on it, none on the wedding finger; and it did not look like Katie's little hand.

'No,' he said, and passed on farther. Going home his hansom had to cross the river, and he leaned out with a sort of horror at the waters that looked so black. Did they hold the truth? He could not shake off the terrible idea.

The detectives did not loiter. They kept asking information, putting questions that angered Katie's husband past all bearing. One went down to Scotland, getting no help there; the others pervaded London. But nowhere was there any sign of Katie.

Then John Macquoid turned his face from London and came north, taking little Johnnie. He rode over from Auchendrane on the moorland road where Katie had driven so often when the heather was in bloom, purple on either side, to see Katie's family.

James was dazed. He could not attempt to fathom the matter; it was, as Katie herself had always been to him, incomprehensible.

John Macquoid walked into the faded drawing-room, where there were photographs of Katie, or had been, for they were bundled hastily out of sight, and her eyes shone out on him no longer from the dim corners of the room. He did not wait to consider the attitude of Katie's sisters; they were her sisters, and, as such, the first women to help him in his need, to listen, and to be kind.

'Give me some help!' cried John Macquoid. 'You are her sisters, and you know her. You can tell me what you think—and fear.' But their lips were closed.

'Whatever you think, it is better to speak it fairly,' he said at last, with a sharp tone that had not yet broken through his sorrow. 'I will tell you what I fear. Either my poor Katie is dead—the sisters did not look as if they thought so—or she has left me. I remember some words I overheard just after she said "Yes" to me—words that I did not then think or care about, but that haunt me now. Did she marry me for the sake of—outer things? Was her heart buried with her first husband, and awakened rudely to the knowledge of being bound? Then I can understand; I can fancy how a dislike, that she did not let me see, grew upon her day by day; how when Johnnie was a baby, her first and only child, she might for

a time forget it; but only to feel it suddenly again with a strength that was unbearable, until she gave in to the impulse to be free—to belong wholly to the dead—or die. You can tell me if this is true?’

They did not answer directly. Then Bella spoke: ‘Did you meet Captain Rose in town?’ Her question was curiously irrelevant, but she put it carefully.

‘I don’t know. Yes,’ said Macquoid, staring at her. Bella coughed, but she did not speak any further. If ever there were a damning silence, this was one.

‘Why do you ask?’ said John Macquoid; but she would not say. He looked at her keenly.

Jane folded her hands and spoke; each word was like the dropping of cold, hard water. ‘We can tell you nothing,’ she said. ‘Katie has never trusted or confided in us much. We do not know anything of her past that is not quite open to any person. She had a different mother. This disgrace has overwhelmed us, and it is well that we live out on the moors, where we do not need to look into people’s faces, and where it is therefore less painful that we—cannot. We feel for you, John, and we feel also for ourselves. But do not ask us to feel for—Katie.’

‘How can you speak of disgrace? I spoke of none,’ said John Macquoid; ‘and I will tell you what I believe: that your sister must be—dead.’

‘Dead to us, you would say,’ Jane said, without a falter. ‘She is no longer a sister of ours: do not speak of her. Would you like one of us to go with you and take care of poor little Johnnie at Auchendrane?’

John Macquoid rose up to go. His voice was as hard as her own, and his eyes were angry. ‘Thank you,’ he said. ‘If you are no sister of hers, you can scarcely be Johnnie’s aunt.’

The mystery gave talk to many. But it was no nearer solution when the talk was done; when all the world settled to another subject, and only John Macquoid of Auchendrane remembered. Macquoid was peculiar, people said when they thought about him; not when he was with them, speaking and looking like any other man, but when his broad back was turned, and small scraps of bye-information drifted to their ears.

The motherless years passed over Johnnie’s head, and most thought that it would be good for Johnnie to forget he had once a mother; some things are fittest to be forgotten, they would remark. But John Macquoid did not think with them. He did not even think with the aunts, which was foolish, as who but they should know best the character of their sister?—the sister they never mentioned.

Two days in the year he kept as anniversaries—one Katie’s wedding-day and his, and the other the day she left him. On that last day a black sash was tied round Johnnie, and in the gloaming Macquoid took the boy on his knee, and showed him his mother’s picture with the fluffy hair and the steadfast eyes. He spoke softly, telling little stories of the lost mother, as one tells stories of the dead. On the wedding-day Johnnie came down to dinner

with his hair brushed long and curly, and sat like a lady at the end of the table, lifting up his small glass when bidden to drink mamma’s health. And when the child went up to bed John Macquoid sat down and wrote a letter.

It was a cry to Katie if she lived to come home to him—to him and to her child. Written in a dream, with only longing and little hope to inspire its words, it was like a message to the dead. He hardly hoped she would hear it; he did not think it would reach her surer than the call that died in the night and found no echo. But he sent it to the principal papers, and he dropped his head on his hands and prayed it might find her—if she lived. All was dark, and there was no light anywhere.

Between these days he was much the same as of old. He shot as well and he rode as straight, nor was he as gray as one might expect. Indeed, more than one young woman wished to herself that there were some certain news of Katie, or wished that she were a myth, while wondering casually whether her own frocks became her.

One such was Eleanor Strom, and Eleanor was comely. Those who saw Johnnie refuse to hug her on one occasion were sure she would be—eventually—his step-mamma. Children have nearly as much instinct—if it were only known—as dogs; and John did like Eleanor Strom as much as anybody.

In the sixth year of his wife’s disappearance Eleanor sat on the heather near Auchendrane. It was a shooting-party. There was an old lady roaming about with a gun and short skirts, so it was all quite proper.

‘I am going to town to-morrow,’ said Eleanor Strom. She thought John Macquoid looked sorry as he asked if it were business or pleasure that took her there.

‘Both. It is clothes,’ said she. These clothes were to make her—charming.

In the sixth year of his wife’s disappearance John Macquoid received a telegram from his solicitor, asking him to come up to London on important and pressing business. As he read over the brief words a sudden hope leaped into his eyes; but it faded out dully as he remembered a certain deed that was quite sufficiently important to make such a journey called for by a solicitor who fussed. It was only that.

Johnnie stopped behind. He had been taking him about wherever he went, but this was to be a short stay, and it was not worth while unsettling the little chap. He drove to the station early, and there in the train—but not in a ‘Ladies Only’—was Eleanor Strom and her bags and boxes.

There were friends on the platform, friends with handkerchiefs and umbrellas, and some with dogs. They were crying noisy good-byes and waving their hands: all friends of Eleanor Strom. As John Macquoid appeared the look on Eleanor’s face spread itself to theirs. It was a look that meant more than a look should do if there is no foundation. Eleanor hoped there was some, and her friends asked John that she should be taken care of. Their second or third good-byes were a little cheerier.

It should not be difficult, after all these years, and no sign whatever, to prove that Mrs Macquoid was not in the land of the living.

And so John went half-heartedly up to London.

It was raining. The wet made the whole air clammy, and emptied the streets of all who could keep out of them. But Eleanor Storn had some clothes-requirements that could not wait, and she dashed by in a hansom as John Macquoid walked across the pavement from his, and faced the solicitor's door-plate.

'He is going to start inquiries,' thought Eleanor, sticking her fine new bonnet far out into the wet, and seeing the gilded letters with eyes that no rain could blind.

'It is that deed, I suppose?' said John, when he had been taken into the private office. The solicitor looked queerly at him.

'Can you stand a shock?' he said.

There was strength in those square shoulders and in the squarer chin. 'I can stand anything,' said John Macquoid; but his face was paler, losing the colour struck into it by the rain.

'Then go in there,' said the other quietly, pointing to an inner door. John Macquoid got up, and two strides took him up to the threshold. But the lawyer stopped him there. He was a nervous man, and had apparently spoken in unprofessional hurry to shirk something which should be got over first.

'I must explain matters to you—and prepare you,' he began, uncertainly. 'It is a painful business'—

'Let me know the worst,' said John Macquoid hoarsely, but he did not wait to hear it, seeing that many long words would reach him first. He opened that door, and shut it.

'Katie!'

It was she—she truly, as she had always been; thinner and paler, less bird-like in her look, but with the same steadfast eyes. She put out her hands, but did not seem sure if he would take them, and greeted his cry with, 'O John, John!' in a shamed and piteous voice.

Katie herself. That was all her husband could understand. She was there; he was holding her, crushing her against the heart that had beat so sorely all these years: and he had not thought of a question yet. For a while neither could speak; then Katie lifted her head.

'John—you will marry me at once?' she said.

He stared at her. Was she—mad?

She saw his wonder and dropped her eyes. 'Did he not tell you? Do you not know?' she asked.

'He has told me nothing. I—I think I would not wait,' said John Macquoid.

Katie's face, that had been so very pale, was crimson. She took his hands in hers, for they were encouraging to hold, and began to tell her story.

'I went out by myself that day,' she said, 'and I was thinking of the surprise I was going to get for Johnnie. I did not look where I was going, and all at once I ran into some-

body, who looked up at my "Pardon!" and caught my arm. It was William, my first husband—William!'

She shuddered at the recollection, and went on bravely: 'In South America they make—mistakes. He was not dead, and he had come back for me. I did not faint; I had no time for that. I looked at him.

"Come over into the Park," he said, "and I will tell you everything." He took me across the street; I could hardly walk alone—and while we were crossing I made up my mind. It was like an awful dream, a vision of grinning horses' heads, of shouts and flashes, and of him beside me, touching me, the greatest horror of all. Through the quick nightmare, oh, my dear, my dear! I thought of you. I was not your wife then—I was nothing. And what was Johnnie? My little child, my poor little luckless child! I could not faint or die while I had him to think for. The wheels were flashing and whirling past, and his hand was on my arm. The street was wide'—

She shuddered once again; but her voice was quiet. 'I thought: "I could die now easily if that would help; it would only be dropping under that wheel, waiting for these dark hoofs to strike life out of me. But then—my husband with me, and my other—husband—seeking, it would all become, surely, plain; and shame would be left to Johnnie. I will do what is harder." For I felt it would hurt you less if I left you without one word. If you loved me you might think me dead, and grieve, but not so bitterly as if you knew. If you did not care for me as—I did for you—and, John, I was not always sure—you would think evil of me and feel only anger. And you would have Johnnie. There would be no blight on his life, and it would not hurt my darling—so it would pain you less.

'I did not die—and we had crossed the street. The flowers stared in my face as William told me how it had come about, and why he had been so long. It was like other stories that we read in books and call impossible till we see them in the papers, or feel them terribly in our lives. He had been going north to find me, and—thank God!—he had seen me first.

'I looked at the flowers that were so bright—for I could not yet bear to see the face that I thought forgotten—and I said: "Since these years in your life are blank to me, we must blot them out of mine. If you will not let it be so, let us say good-bye. But if you will take me now, telling no soul that knows us, asking no question—I will come." I think that he guessed, because he consented, and took me.'

'Go on,' said John Macquoid.

'There is nothing after that; only pain,' said Katie. 'There were few women out there. He needed me. And I was glad to be in a strange, strange country, where there was no one thing I knew to make me drop down and sob. I was always looking in the Scottish papers for a word of you and Johnnie; my heart would be sick till I had seen what there was—and was not. And your cry reached me, oh, my dear, my dear!—the cry that I dared not

answer. It comforted me that you called for me, and hoped, and had less to bear than I—and you had Johnnie. Then my—husband died.'

'And you are'—

'Let me finish. I strengthened my soul to come home to you. But oh, the fear and the doubt that crushed me, more bitter than the old hopelessness! You would believe my story—for I had proof—but how much might you not be changed? Even the words of the cry that reached me from over the sea could not give me courage. It might be some other Katie for whom the words were calling; I, who had taken them to myself, might be only thought of with scorn, or else quite forgotten; and there might—in six dragging years—well, be somebody you had grown to care for. O John, the terror of that fancy! But I thought of Johnnie. For his sake you would marry me, and in Scotland his wrong would be righted; he would be your heir. You must love him, your own child, who had so long been all yours only. For his sake I must come straight home to you. And, John—when I look in your eyes—I know that I have—come home.'

That was all her story.

They were married. Not as before, with gifts and speeches, and a crowd of faces to look at Katie—the marriage words were spoken to them only, and they could hear and know them better in their hearts. Then they went home to Johnnie.

TIMBUCTOO.

For centuries Europe has dreamed of a great and wealthy city in the heart of the Soudan—a centre of Moslem influence and the 'hub' of African commerce. Wonderful tales of the riches and beauty of Timbuctoo have been brought to us across the desert by the caravans which, century after century, have traversed the long route to and from the North African seaboard. Mungo Park lost his life in trying to reach this mysterious city, the first European to enter which was probably Major Laing, in 1826—though this is disputed by the French. Anyhow, Laing's observations were lost to us, for he was murdered on the return journey, and it has been reserved for a Frenchman to give us the most graphic and realistic picture of the Saharan city that has yet been presented.*

To reach Timbuctoo is now a very different matter from what it was in the days of Park and Laing and Barth. The French 'sphere' now includes it, and from St Louis, the port of Senegal, the French have a service of steamers up the Senegal river to Kayes, the port of the Soudan, from which a railway is being carried across to the Niger, upon whose broad bosom there is extensive canoe-traffic right up to Timbuctoo. Thus in about six weeks from leaving

London one may embark at Bammaku, on the Niger, and in another week or two enter the mysterious city, whose veil has been lifted in the European scramble for Africa. There is much to see by the way, for the Upper Niger, more like an inland ocean than a river, presents an infinite variety of scenery and of human types. Our object just now, however, is not to describe the great African highway, which is to the Soudan what the Nile is to Egypt. Great as is the interest of the upward journey, everything falls before the surprise of the traveller on reaching Jenne, which is situated on one of the numerous tributaries of the great river, and is called the 'Jewel of the Valley of the Niger.' It is necessary that we should pause here, for Jenne is also the 'Mother of Timbuctoo.'

This is the picture presented to M. Dubois as he gazed from the prow of his canoe-barge: 'A vast plain, infinitely flat, without a touch of relief; no village nor any other sign of humanity, only now and again some trees at long intervals, showing as dark spots upon the yellow-green expanse. In the very midst of this solitude is a circle of water, and within it, rising victorious (like the summit of the palm-tree amidst the sands of the desert), is reared a long mass of high and regular walls, erected on mounds as high and nearly as steep as themselves. A forest of projections crowns them with terraced roofs, palms, gable-ends, stairs, and dome-like trees; a whole smiling life salutes me from the height of this little island.' Then, as the boat approaches the town, the banks and walls stand out in larger proportions, and a harbour is disclosed, with large boats quite different from, and superior to, the canoes seen lower down the Niger. For Jenne is a great place of shipping and of ship-building, as well as of commerce. It is a town more in the European than in the African sense. That is to say, it has regularly laid-out streets of brick-built houses, not higgledy-piggledy arrangements of mud-huts; and these houses are neither Moorish nor Arabic in architecture and character, but distinctly Egyptian. How comes this fragment of old Egypt in the Valley of the Niger? The story is a long one; but, briefly, the city of Jenne owes its foundation to the Songhois, or Songhays, who are believed to have migrated from the Nile Valley in the seventh century. They wandered westward, and after one hundred and twenty years reached their westernmost limit—and there arose the city of Jenne. To this day the inhabitants preserve the type rather of the Nubian than of the West African negro, and they speak a language quite different from any of the Soudanese dialects. We need not follow here the rise and fall of the Songhay empire, as revealed in the manuscript records which have been brought to light. Suffice it to say that when the Moors overran the country in the seventeenth century its prosperity began to decline, and after two centuries of misrule and marauding it is hoped that a new and better era has now set in, under the protecting arm of France. The comparative isolation of Jenne has preserved it from the destruction that was the fate of so many of the Soudanese towns, and it remains to-day

* *Timbuctoo the Mysterious*, by Felix Dubois. Translated by Diana White. (London: William Heinemann.)

practically as it was in the days of the Songhay empire. The inhabitants say the city was never taken and never pillaged.

This strange fragment of the old world has been for centuries one of the great commercial centres of Islam. It is situated in an extremely fertile district on a branch of the Niger. In place of the primitive barter between village and village, the people of Jenne built up a real commerce. They formed business firms with agents all over the Soudan, and had travellers who regularly went round for orders on commission. They built fleets of cargo-boats, and they established branches at Timbuctoo, there to intercept the business of the great Saharan caravans.

What are the objects in which they trade? In their great warehouses, which are the ground-floor of their Egyptian dwellings, are great stores of rice and millet and other cereals, jars of honey, blocks of karita, bags of spices, piles of onions, cakes of indigo, baskets of kola-nuts, the fruit of the baobab, iron bars from Mossi, ostrich feathers, ivory, gold, civet-musk, lead from the mountains of Hombouri, marble bracelets such as Niger people love, antimony (used by the negroes to darken and increase the brilliancy of their eyes), native fabrics, linen and woollen cloths, and yellow, black, and blue draperies. Also slaves—in which there seems as large a traffic as in anything. We learn, too, that there is no specialisation in trade. Each merchant sells everything, from slaves to spices, and from cloth to cereals. They do not themselves go to market, but send an agent with a small stock of samples, while they remain in their own dwellings and counting-houses. The great merchants have their own boats for the transport of cargo, and there are also 'tramp' boats for charter by the small traders.

The merchants of Jenne were not long in appreciating the splendid geographical position of Timbuctoo—especially as they were much in need of salt, only to be obtained from the caravans. So they sent agents there, and some of them built houses which they occupied for business purposes during the height of the caravan season. In fact, Jenne was the real fount and origin of the commerce and wealth for which Timbuctoo gained the reputation. Timbuctoo, has been known for centuries all over the world, while the name of Jenne is quite unfamiliar to most of us. This is explainable by the fact that the caravans from Morocco, Tuat, Tripoli, and Tunis stretched across the desert to Timbuctoo, but never went farther west. They had no need to do so, for they found at Timbuctoo all they wanted, including merchants eager to buy their camel-loads of food, and European cloths and hardware, and salt. Besides, beyond Timbuctoo they found a country intersected by water-channels and periodically submerged, in which their camels would have been totally useless. Thus at Timbuctoo the camel-traffic and the canoe-traffic met and was exchanged.

Timbuctoo is not on the Niger. Leaving Jenne, and regaining the main channel of the great river, one may by boat in eight or ten days (according to the season and the possibility or otherwise of night travelling) reach Kabara, which is the port of Timbuctoo. Landing there, one finds a sandy stretch of desolate country, said to be so

infested by robbers that no one crosses except under convoy. There is now a daily escort of twenty soldiers, under whose protection the stream of people, camels, and donkeys sets to and from the river and the city.

As we gave M. Dubois' picture of Jenne as it first presented itself to him, so now let us give his first picture of Timbuctoo as he approached it across the desert: 'A dark silhouette, large and long, an image of grandeur in immensity—thus appeared the "Queen of the Soudan." Across the space everything looks simple and severe: the forest is dwarfed out of sight, and nothing diminishes the vast landscape, which is lighted by the throbbing glare of the veritable sun of the desert. Truly she is enthroned upon the horizon with the majesty of a queen. She is indeed the city of imagination, the Timbuctoo of European legend. Her sandy approaches are strewn with bones and carcasses that have been disinterred by wild beasts, the remains of the camels, horses, and donkeys that have fallen down and died in the last stages of the journey. The cities of the East are invariably encircled by their bones, and the roads across the desert are lined by their bodies. The details of the distant shape grow clearer by degrees. The illusion of walls produced by the distinctness with which the town stands out from the white sand disappears, and three towers placed at regular intervals dominate the mass. The terraces of square houses are now distinguishable, giving an appearance of depth to the outlined mass, and renewing the first impression of grandeur.'

This is only the exterior appearance, however, when distance lends enchantment to the view. To enter the town is to encounter as great a surprise as on entering Jenne, but of a wholly different sort. Here in Timbuctoo we step into what seems a mass of crumbling ruins, without a vestige of the fabled splendour. What in the distance seemed city ramparts turn out to be a mass of deserted houses—with roofs fallen in, doors gone, and walls broken and tumbling. In what were once the streets are piles of earth and masses of *débris* suggestive of wholesale destruction.

Struggling through the ruins, the traveller comes to the market-place, but instead of prosperous traders and eager customers he finds only a few women with little baskets selling insignificant wares. What has become of the universal commerce of the 'Queen of the Soudan'—of the wealth and prosperity of Timbuctoo?

Only after a few days' quiet residence and observation is the mystery explained. All this appearance of ruin and poverty is assumed for a purpose—to deceive the marauding Tuaregs. There is plenty of life and movement among the ruins, and behind the rigidly closed doors a large business is still being conducted—secretly, in fear of the descendants of the very people who founded the city in the dim and distant past. Just as Jenne was Egyptian, so was Timbuctoo Arabian in origin, but its greatness was largely due to the Moors who, driven out of Spain, went wandering up the Niger. Its misfortunes have been due to wandering and marauding tribes of the same race, the portion of the Berber race known as Tuaregs, whose form of Islamism became a belief in talismans. From the time of the first settlers the place became a station for

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the caravans, and the population steadily increased. But it did not become a town worthy of the name until the merchants of Jenne (which had been founded three hundred years earlier) came and showed the people of Timbuctoo how to build houses of baked brick. They also built a mosque, and a temple which afterwards became the 'University of Sankoré,' as M. Dubois somewhat fancifully calls it. Timbuctoo then grew rapidly in importance and in prosperity, until in the seventeenth century the Moorish blight fell upon the Soudan. Then the Tuaregs and other nomadic tribes increased in their aggressions and their power of evil—the caravan trade began to fall off under the fear of the robbers, and the population of the city dwindled. By the beginning of the present century Timbuctoo was practically in the hands of the Tuaregs, who 'bled' its inhabitants nearly to financial death. It is only now slowly recovering, we are told, under the protection of the French flag, and the commerce which of late years has been conducted behind locked doors because of the ever-present marauders will once more be seen in the market-places.

Timbuctoo is essentially a place of exchange—an entrepôt—where meet those who travel and traffic by camel, and those who do so by canoe. It is the point of junction of the Arab with the Negro world. It is at the outlet of a labyrinth of Niger water-channels on the verge of the desert, and is described as 'like a port with bonded docks situated on the coast of an opulent continent, with a sea of sand stretching before her upon which the fleets of the desert come and go.' Hither comes all the commerce of the desert, and across the desert come the long caravans of the Moorish and Algerian merchants of the far north. These bring the produce of Morocco and Algeria and Tunis, with European cloths and arms and hardware, and, above all, loads of salt; in exchange for which they take back gold and ivory, ostrich feathers, raw leather, wax, incense, indigo, gum, and such other produce as the Soudan and the Niger basin can offer. Now all this traffic passes through Timbuctoo, but does not belong to it.

The camels discharge their cargoes into the canoes, from which in turn they load up for their homeward journey. Timbuctoo is only the place of trans-shipment, and its inhabitants are the brokers and intermediaries in the trade. For the rest, they make profit by providing board and lodging for the caravans. These, of the large sort, may include from six hundred to one thousand camels, and from three to five hundred men, carrying goods to the value of £30,000 or £40,000. They arrive twice a year—December to January, and July to August. But smaller caravans of sixty or one hundred camels are arriving constantly all the year round, so that there is an unceasing supply of strangers to be provided for. It is said that from fifty to sixty thousand laden camels reach Timbuctoo every year by different tracks across the Sahara. To the stranger merchants hospitality is offered by the inhabitants, and the understanding is, that for the first three days the entertainment is free, and that on the fourth day payment begins, while the landlord acts also as cicerone and broker. Under the crumbling ruins are many shops richly furnished with the fabrics of Europe and the Soudan and

the products of the district. There are certain brokers who devote themselves exclusively to gold, or cattle, or salt, or textiles, and occasionally the richer merchants of Timbuctoo will rig the markets by buying up the 'spot' supplies of the chief articles of commerce just before the caravans or fleets are due. In the time of its greatest prosperity Timbuctoo does not seem to have had a larger resident population than about fifty thousand, and we judge that the present population is about a third of that number.

But now we begin to understand why this comparatively small city has acquired such a reputation through the centuries. The caravans from the north had many weeks and months of weary trudging under a burning sun through a waterless desert. They are nearly dead with thirst and fatigue, when, 'one morning three little black spots show upon the burning horizon. The camels cease to grumble—they roar; and as the three minarets grow clearer, Timbuctoo displays her majestic form. Behold her gardens, her palm-trees, and her gleaming waters! The town is three times as large as it is to-day, and the streets are fresh and cool under the shade of the great trees, and they seethe with the life of its fifty thousand inhabitants. In place of the solitude, abandonment, and misery of to-day, it presents the traveller with a satiety of everything desirable. With abundance of water and shade, it represents the saving help of the Word of God, the charm of the word of man, the wealth of gold and ivory, the sweetness of honey, and a profusion of smiles. I have been told that men went temporarily mad upon seeing it for the first time.'

Such was Timbuctoo, and now that we know the secret of its influence, there is no room left for wonder that tales of its splendour spread even into Europe, and grew as they spread. So wondrous became the tales, that we have grown accustomed to think of the fabulous city of Timbuctoo as something akin to the fabulous country of Prester John. But though exaggerated it was no fable, and even in her present squalor the 'Queen of the Soudan' possesses the elements of a new era of fortune; for her geographical position is unique—on the threshold of the Soudan between the eastern and western Niger, 'two arms which embrace the whole of Western Africa.'

TOMATOES AND THEIR PRESERVATION IN ITALY.

THE perfection to which the tomato or love-apple as grown in England has been brought is the result of the care and perseverance used in tending it.

The island of Guernsey is famous for its culture of tomatoes, which are sent in large quantities to the Covent Garden market by the steamers which leave the island daily for England. Most of this fruit is grown under glass, and requires constant attention.

This is not the case, however, in Southern Italy, where it grows in splendid profusion, nature being its best gardener. It thrives best in moist ground and in places exposed to the sun. In many a humble balcony boxes of tomatoes flourish, with their long branches trailing down through the rails, heavy with their abundant fruit.

The seed is sown in the month of March, and

when the plants are young they must be frequently watered; but when they begin to flower they are left to themselves till the fruit is ripe. In warm and sheltered places the tomatoes ripen in the month of June, but the height of the season is in July and August. Its name in Italian is 'Pomodoro,' or golden apple, though the colour is certainly not golden, but bright red.

Tradition in Italy says that this was the apple that tempted Eve, because of its beauty. It is one of the chief staples of food among the poor during the summer months, when the fruit can be bought for a soldo per kilo—that is, a halfpenny for two English pounds. The country-people make a good meal off tomatoes and bread; even babies in arms will hold out their little hands for them, tempted by their bright-red colour. Those who can afford it eat them in salad with oil and vinegar.

When the month of August sets in the tomatoes are in full perfection, and this is the time when they are fit for preserving, for they have ripened in the scorching sun, and, as a rule, they have not been exposed to the rain, which seldom falls in any considerable quantity till after the middle of August. Should the fruit have been much exposed to the damp it easily spoils when preserved.

In every house and cottage the preserving of tomatoes is carried on. Terraces, balconies, and even the flat roofs of the houses are half covered with plates containing the deep-red substance. Near the doors of the houses tubs and basins are to be seen filled with it while the process of preserving is going on. There are two kinds of tomatoes: the large ones, which sometimes grow to an immense size, are round, and often somewhat flat; the small ones, which are of a different quality, slightly pear-shaped. The former give a stronger flavour to the preserve, which accordingly goes further; the latter, however, contain more juice, and can therefore be more easily pressed through a sieve. This kind of tomato is also dried for winter use, and bundles are hung from the rafters of the ceilings in the houses of the poor, and also outside against the walls of their balconies, while the weather continues fine. Though the skin is much shrivelled, and they are somewhat tasteless, they retain, in some degree, the flavour of fresh fruit.

After gathering, the tomatoes intended for preserve are spread out for some hours in the sun till the skin has somewhat shrunk. They are then passed through a sieve, so that they may be freed both of seeds and skins. As they contain a large proportion of water, the substance which has been passed through the sieve must be hung in bags, from which the water exudes, and soon a pool of dirty-looking water is formed beneath each bag. Strange to say, it is in no way tinged with red. The mixture which remains in the bags has the consistency of a very thick paste. It is then salted, the proportion being a little less than an ounce of salt to a pound of the preserve. The process now requires that it should be spread on flat plates, exposed to the sun, and stirred from time to time with a wooden spoon, so that the upper part may not form a crust, while underneath it remains soft. It is a picturesque sight when the women are to be seen flitting about on their roofs and terraces, attending to their deep-red preserve, their coloured handkerchiefs flung

on their heads to screen them from the rays of the burning sun when it is at its fiercest. In the evening the contents of the various plates are taken in and stirred up together, for if moistened by the night dew the whole would be spoilt. After being exposed to the sun for seven or eight days, the same process being repeated each day, the preserve is finished and placed in jars for winter use.

Though it is used by all classes of persons, it is more necessary to the poor than to the rich, for the latter can make use of the fresh tomatoes preserved in tins. Tomatoes may be tinned whole, as we know from those usually imported into England from America. But in Italy the fruit is usually passed through a sieve, the pulp being then placed in tins, which are immediately soldered down, and then put in boiling water for five minutes. The original flavour is thus retained. The cost of a small tin is half a franc, so it is as a rule beyond the means of the poor. The price of the preserve is seldom more than eightpence a pound, and a little of it goes very far; but those who are thrifty take care to make it for themselves, the cost then being absolutely insignificant.

It is chiefly used by them for flavouring their macaroni in the winter; in fact, there are few dishes which are not improved by a little tomato preserve, and it finds favour in all classes.

A SONG IN WINTER.

A ROBIN sings on the leafless spray,

Hey ho, winter will go!

Sunlight shines on the desolate way,
And under my feet

I feel the beat

Of the world's heart that never is still,
Never is still

Whatever may stay.

Life out of death, as day out of night,

Hey ho, winter will go!

In the dark hedge shall glimmer a light,

A delicate sheen

Of budding green,

Then, silent, the dawn of summer breaks,

As morning breaks,

O'er valley and height.

The tide ebbs out, and the tide flows back;

Hey ho, winter will go!

Though heaven be screen'd by a stormy rack,

It rains, and the blue

Comes laughing through;

And, cloud-like, winter goes from the earth,

Goes from the earth

That flowers in his track.

Sing, robin, sing on your leafless spray,

Hey ho, winter will go!

Sunlight and song shall shorten the way,

And under my feet

I feel the beat

Of the world's heart that never is still,
Never is still

Whatever may stay.

A. ST JOHN ADCOCK.

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